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CHILDREN

OUT-OF-DOORS

A BOOK OF VERSES

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THE CHILDREN OUT-OF-DOORS.

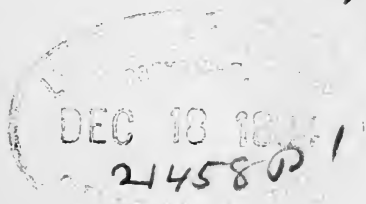
THE CHILDREN OUT-OF-DOORS

A Book of Verses

BY TWO IN ONE HOUSE

John James Pi
and Sarah
Morgan Bay
P. Platt.

33



CINCINNATI
ROBERT CLARKE & CO.
1885

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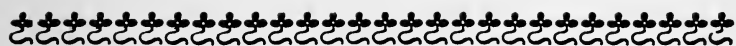
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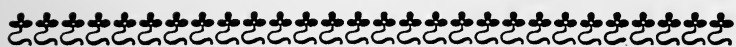
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I.



THE CHILDREN OUT-OF-DOORS



THE CHILDREN OUT-OF-DOORS.⁽¹⁾

I.

THEIR wandering cries are in the windy street ;
 (O faces wan and sweet !)
What ear doth stoop to listen, eye to mark
 Those footsteps in the dark ?

In my warm room, full-filled with childish glee,
 The still thought troubles me :
These children I call mine ; what parent yours,
 Ye children out-of-doors ?

Fatherless, motherless, shelterless, unfed
 Save crusts of bitter bread !
How dare I rest, my lids to sleep resign ?—
 Are ye not also mine ?

II.

Who is it, in the deep-breathed winter night,
While snow lies starry-bright,
Knocks at my door? (Or did a passing wind
Deceive my empty mind?)

It is a little child, sore-pinched with cold,
Ragged and hunger-bold,
Houseless and friendless goes from door to door,
Knocking, as oft before.

“Arise, and let Him in!” a voice is heard,
At which my sleep was stirred
A little, oh a little! and my heart
Beat with a quickening start.

“Arise, and let Him in!”—a voice, no more,
Sleep double-locks the door;
And Christ, who, child-like, piteously came,
Leaves me to waking shame.

III.

He, born in each of these, the Son of God,
Walks, so disguised, abroad ;
Dwells in mean places, nursed by cold and want,
Abused, half-naked, gaunt.

He goes, a homeless child, to happy homes,
Whence light, with laughter, comes
From blissful hearths, through many a shining pane.
He waits, in frost or rain.

Blessèd they are who hearken when He knocks,
And open eager locks ;
Who bid from out-of-doors the stranger come,
And give the homeless home.

Oh, blessèd they who in His piteous guise
The Wanderer recognise ;
The Light of the World through conscious doors
they win
Who rise and let Him in !

IV.

Their wandering cries are in the windy street ;
 (O faces wan and sweet !)
What ear doth stoop to listen, eye to mark
 Those footsteps in the dark ?

In my warm room, full-filled with childish glee,
 The still thought troubles me :
These children I call mine ; what parent yours,
 Ye children out-of-doors ?

Fatherless, motherless, shelterless, unfed
 Save crusts of bitter bread !
How dare I rest, my lids to sleep resign ?—
 Are ye not also mine ?

TWO CHAPTERS OF HISTORY

TWO CHAPTERS OF HISTORY

(FOR A LITTLE BOY AT CHRISTMAS-TIME).

I.

Two Kings ruled in an Eastern land,
 King Gentle Heart, King Mighty Hand.
 With Mighty Hand the King, how fast
 The fertile fields to deserts passed !
 Birds flew distraught and blossoms failed ;
 The mothers wept, the children wailed ;
 All harvesters an armed band,
 The sword was in the reaper's hand ;—
 There shone no joyous Christmas-Day
 When Mighty Hand the King had sway.

II.

Two Kings ruled in an Eastern land,
 King Gentle Heart, King Mighty Hand.
 With Gentle Heart the King, again
 The desert grew a harvest plain ;

Bees hummed, the blossom apples made ;
Birds put delight in sun and shade ;
Mothers o'er cradles crooning hung ;
Strong men in wheat-fields reaping sung ;—
Then Christmas came, the Children's Day,
When Gentle Heart the King had sway.

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THE SUNSHINE OF SHADOWS



THE SUNSHINE OF SHADOWS.⁽²⁾

(ON A PHOTOGRAPH OF THREE CHILDREN.)

THREE children's shadow-faces look
From my familiar picture-book :
Far from their father's threshold sweet
I found them in a noisy street.

"Dear children, come with me," I said,
"And make my home your own instead ;
Your gentle looks, your tender words,
Shall mate the sunbeams, charm the birds."

They came, but never lip is stirred
With merry laugh or mirthful word :
As in a trance at me they look
Whene'er I ope their prisoning book.

But as I gaze, in reverie bound,
The silence overflows with sound ;
From garden haunts of birds and bees
Hum voices through the blossoming trees.

Like waters heard when breezes blow,
Light laughters waver to and fro ;
Then, when my dream is gone, I say—
“Some wind has blown the sound away.”

For the light breeze, alighting brief,
Turns with its sudden wings the leaf,
And, like a passing sunshine, they
Seem so to shout and fly away !

1864.

IN WINTER NIGHT

IN WINTER NIGHT.

WE walk in the Winter wind to-night ;
Our hearts have wings, we have footsteps light ;
The stars of home in our breasts arise—
The window-stars shine into our eyes.

The gaslights stoop and flare in the wind,
The flying snow makes the long street blind ;
Our faces warm with fireside glow—
Our hearth-fires dance at home, we know.

Hark to the feet that past us move,
Echoes of hapless hearts above !
Faces come gleaming into our own
And vanish ;—we hear the feet alone.

No glamour of firelight, sweet and warm,
Defends these walkers in the storm ;—
In Winter wind, through the icy street,
Ah, hopeless hearts ! ah, homeless feet !

HALF-LIVES

HALF-LIVES.

I.

Two were they, two ;—but one
They might have been. Each knew
The other's spirit fittest mate, apart.
Ah, hapless ! though once jealous Fortune drew
Them almost heart to heart,
In a brief-lighted sun !

II.

So near they came, and then—they are
So far !
They seemed like two who pass,
Each on a world-long journey opposite,
Their two trains hurrying dark
With far-drawn roar through the dread deeps of night,

(Oh, faces close—they almost touched, alas !

Oh, hands that might have thrilled with meeting spark !

Oh, lips that might have kissed !

Oh, eyes with folded sight,

Dreaming some vision bright !)

In mystery and in mist.

TWO SISTERS

TWO SISTERS.

THEY were two sisters, twins of a sweet mother,
 Who gave to everything their wandering glad-
 ness,

Wreathing their infant arms about each other,—
 Charmed with quick light each shadow-shape of
 sadness.

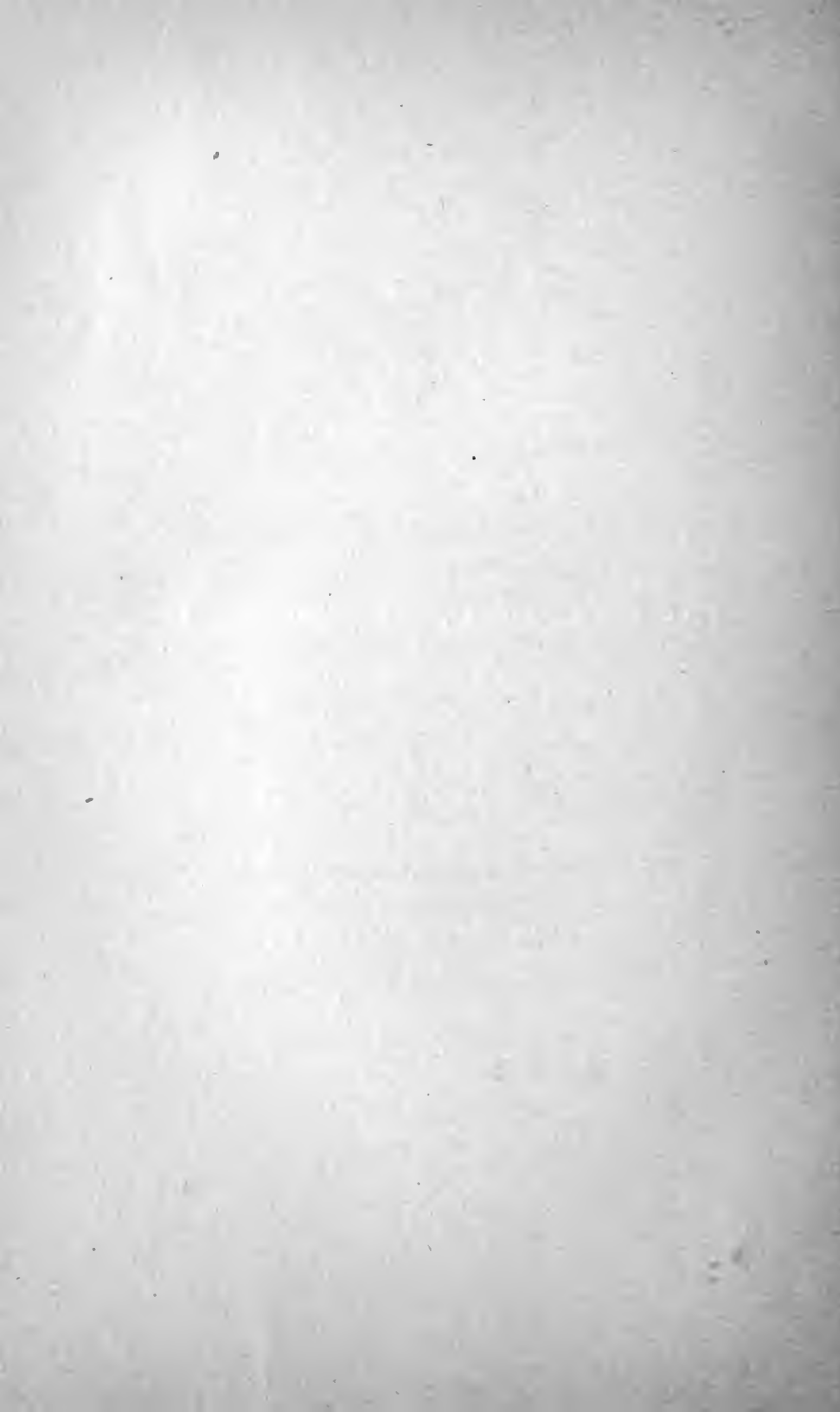
Now, having gathered childhood's blossoming years
 Into their hearts, the one, oftentimes, alone,
 Wears on her face high music of far spheres,
 Into the still night's holy silence grown :
 Angels of Heaven white-winged walk through her
 soul.

—— Dancing her way, the other, breaking
 through

That starry atmosphere, with bright control,
 Shows her the fairy people of moon and dew.

This loves the sunshine, merry-footed where
The wild-bee haunts; with her the brook is
mated,—
Look, how she chases new-flowered butterflies,
Laughs like the brook and shakes her wind-caught
hair;
Or, blowing bubbles, hails them worlds created,
Peopled with her gay thoughts, their suns her happy
eyes !

THE OUTSIDE OF THE WINDOW



THE OUTSIDE OF THE WINDOW.

THEY stand at the window, peering,
And pressing against the pane
Their beautiful childish faces :
Without are the night and rain.

They stand at the window, peering :
What see they, the children, there ?
A room full of happy faces,
A room full of shining air !

A room full of warmth and brightness,
A room full of pleasant sights,—
Of pictures and statues and vases,
And shadows at play with the lights.

But sweetest of all, to their gazing,
(So near, they seem part of them there !)
Is the room full of happy faces
In the room full of shining air.

Ah me ! my precious observers,
Another sight I shall find——
“What is it ?” I dread to tell you,
And, oh ! it were sweet to be blind !

From the lighted room, through the window,
I see, and have seen them of old,
A world full of wretched faces,
A world full of darkness and cold :

A world full of cold and darkness,
A world full of dreary sights,—
No pictures, nor statues, nor vases,
But shadows that put out the lights.

Ah, saddest of all, through the window
(They seem with us, so near !) I behold
A world full of wretched faces
In a world full of darkness and cold !

IN FIELD AND HIGHWAY

IN FIELD AND HIGHWAY.

I.

A COUNTRY GIRL.

SUNBURNT ! The lily wears no parasol,
And yet is she the whitest flower of all ;
And the rose loses not her delicate blood,
Though green leaves are her seldom gypsy hood.
Margaret's was like the April's spirit in May,
Tenderly bright, gracious and softly gay ;
Her smile was the utterance of a soul, unheard,
That does not need to speak its gentle word :
That word which, spoken, then would be as mild
As when an angel speaks unto a child—
As simple as the child's that does not know
It is an angel whom it answers so.
Her eyes were mirrors made for innocence
To see itself in holy confidence.

II.

RUTH.

(FOR A PICTURE.)

OH, beautiful to-day she stands,
That Gleaner of far days of old,
In Oriental harvest-lands,
Framed in the harvest gold !
The Evening folds her tenderly
In holy calms of breathless air,
And only pensive-throated birds
Seem chanting to her there !

The twilight thick with banded sheaves,
(Half hidden amid its dusky glow,)
With tremulous hush of darkling leaves,—
How solitary ! Lo !
She breathes for ever ! They are gone—
The Reapers—their last harvest o'er,
While in the field of Memory stands
The Gleaner evermore !

III.

ONE BEHIND TIME.

(BY THE ROADSIDE.)

O WORLD upon the hurrying train,
Fly on your way ! For me,
A saunterer through the slighted lane,
A dreamer, let me be.
My footsteps pass away in flowers—
So fragrant all I meet !
Use the quick minutes of your hours,—
The days die here so sweet !



II.



THE FAIRY'S GIFT



THE FAIRY'S GIFT.

(A STORY TOLD TO A LITTLE BOY.)

ABOVE his cradle such a glimmer of green
As might be worn in May by elfin folk
His mother in the dew had sometimes seen,
And in her heart she knew their threshold oak
Held some leaf-coloured eerie hood and cloak.

For once, when in a wood at dusk she found
And cared with tears for the forlornest bird,
That sang the sweeter through the huntsman's wound,
A promise made of music she had heard—
Too fine to trust to any mortal word.

But through the window of a dream, alack !
Her brooding secret flew at last ; and when
Could any woman call a secret back ?
Her peasant husband lordliest of men
Grew, as he whispered the weird story, then.

He talked of days when under his own vine
 (The fig-tree did not grow in that North land)
He should sit down and drink a baron's wine,
 Or climb his feudal stairs, you understand,
 With gold to scatter from his gracious hand.

Meanwhile he folded his strong arms and swore
 The earth might all run wild, he did not care ;
For he had seen, just three times and no more,
 Under the moon, around his baby's hair
 A coil of gold such as a king might wear.

And the young Princess Beautiful (even she,
 The one you know !) would certainly come down
From her dim palace, in the time to be,
 And kindly offer him her father's crown ;
 Spite of that aged man's imperial frown.

So year by year, as blacker grew the bread,
 The growing boy seemed stronger, I confess ;
Though with what fare the gentle child was fed
 The wisest of the people could not guess.
 (Did honey-dews drop in that wilderness ?)

Oh, much the women wondered that they found
So little beauty in his brown, shy face.
How should a head like his be ever crowned
When there were brighter almost any place ?
(True, he was half a bird in voice and grace.)

Yet if he only touched the wildest rose
The blossom seemed enchanted by his hand.
... And still the Princess came not. I suppose
She feared her greybeard father, whose command
Had bound the wrong ring on her hapless hand.

But once in a rude chapel there had been
A wedding. He was not the groom that day.
The loveliest maiden that was ever seen
Lifted her eyes, and as he looked away
His face flushed like a flower, the old people say.

What did he do ? As years and years went by
He tended sheep for some small insolent lord
(And loved the lambs), until there went a cry
That said: "There is no help—take up the sword."
Was he a General, too ? No, on my word !

And in the fight, with his last breath he sent
The water that his mouth had burned for so
Unto another soldier. Oh, I meant
Sir Philip Sidney ? But I did not, though :—
I meant a greater with no name, you know.

The people murmured after he was dead,
Saying, " He helped us. Did the Fairy, then,
Forget to help *him* ?" But a faint voice said,
Out of his mother's lips, " I say again,
Never did Fairy break an oath to men.

" The sweetest gift she promised him—and, oh !
The sweetest gift she gave him upon earth.
Could this be gold or glory ? Surely, no ;
Your king could tell you what these things are
worth,
Shivering to-night beside his lonesome hearth."

What can it be, then, if it was not gold,
Nor pearl, nor anything,—you ask of me ?
The sweetest thing on earth you cannot hold
Out in your hand for all the world to see.
He hid it in his heart. What could it be ?

THE THOUGHT OF ASTYANAX
BESIDE IÜLUS

THE THOUGHT OF ASTYANAX BESIDE

IÜLUS.⁽³⁾

(AFTER READING VIRGIL'S STORY OF ANDROMACHE IN EXILE.)

YES, all the doves begin to moan,—
 But it is not the doves alone.
 Some trouble, that you never heard
 In any tree from breath of bird,
 That reaches back to Eden lies
 Between your wind-flower and my eyes.

I fear it was not well, indeed,
 Upon so sad a day to read
 So sad a story. But the day
 Is full of blossoms, do you say,—
 And how the sun does shine ? I know.
 These things do make it sadder, though.

You'd cry, if you were not a boy,
 About this mournful tale of Troy ?
 Then do not laugh at me, if I—
 Who am too old, you know, to cry—
 Just hide my face a while from you,
 Down here among these drops of dew.

. . . Must I for sorrow look so far ?
This baby headed like a star,
Afraid of Hector's horse-hair plume
(His one sweet child, whose bitter doom
So piteous seems—oh, tears and tears !—)
Has he been dust three thousand years ?

Yet when I see his mother fold
The pretty cloak she stitched with gold
Around another boy, and say :
“ He would be just your age to-day,
With just your hands, your eyes, your hair ”—
Her grief is more than I can bear.

A NEIGHBOURHOOD INCIDENT

A NEIGHBOURHOOD INCIDENT.

“ DID you know, Mamma, that the man was dead
In that pretty place, there under the hill ?”

“ So, with only the clouds to cover his head,
He died down there in that old stone mill ;
He died, in the wind and sleet, and—mark
This truth, fair sirs—in the dark.

“ (Yes, a pretty place !) In the summer-time,
When the birds sing out of the leaves for joy,
And the blue wild morning-glories climb
On the broken walls, it is pretty, my boy :
But not when the world around is snow
And the river is ice below.

“ Men looked sometimes from the morning cars
Toward the place where he lay in the winter sun,
And said, through the smoke of their dear cigars,
That something really ought to be done.
Then talked of the President, or the play,
Or the war—that was farthest away.”

“Do you know when his father wanted some bread,
One time, by the well there? Wasn't he old!
I mean that day when the blossoms were red
On the cliffs, and it wasn't so very cold.”
“And I gave him the little I well could spare
When I looked at his face and hair.

“Then we met him once—it was almost night—
Out looking for berries among the briers,
So withered and weird, such a piteous sight,
And gathering wood for their gypsy fires.
'No, the young man is no better. No, no,'
He would keep on saying, so low.”

“But the women there would not work, they say.”
“Why, that is the story; but, if it be true,
There are other women, I think, to-day
Who will not work, yet, their whole lives through,
All lovely things from the seas and lands
Drop into their idle hands.

“But these would not work, so their brother—and
ours—
Deserved to die in that desolate place?
Shall we send regrets and the usual flowers?
Shall we stop and see the upbraiding face,

As it lies in the roofless room forlorn,
For the sake of a dead man's scorn ?

“ He did his best, as none will deny,
At serving the Earth to pay for his breath ;
So she gave him early (and why not, why ?)
The one thing merciful men call Death.
Ah ! gift that must be gracious indeed,
Since it leaves us nothing to need !

“ . . . As for us, sweet friends, let us dress and
sleep,
Let us praise our pictures and drink our wine.
Meanwhile, let us drive His starving sheep
To our good Lord Christ, on the heights divine ;
For the flowerless valleys are dim and drear,
And the winds right bitter, down here.”

NORTH BEND, OHIO.

HIS MOTHER'S WAY

HIS MOTHER'S WAY.⁽⁴⁾

“ MY Mamma just knows how to cry
About an old glove or a ring,
Or even a stranger going by
The gate, or—almost anything !

“ She cried till both her eyes were red
About *him*, too. (I saw her, though !)
And he was just a ——, Papa said.
(We have to call them that, you know.)

“ She cried about the shabbiest shawl,
Because it cost too much to buy ;
But Papa cannot cry at all,
For he 's a man. And that is why !

“ Why, if his coat was not right new,
And if the yellow bird would die
That sings, and my white kitten too,
Or even himself, *he* would not cry.

“ He said that he would sleep to-night
With both the pistols at his head,
Because that ragged fellow might
Come back. That's what my Papa said !

“ But Mamma goes and hides her face
There in the curtains, and peeps out
At him, and almost spoils the lace ;—
And he is what she cries about !

“ She says he looks so cold, so cold,
And has no pleasant place to stay !
Why can't he work ? He is not old ;
His eyes are blue—they've not turned
grey.”

So the boy babbled. . . . Well, sweet sirs,
Flushed with your office-fires you write
Your laugh down at such grief as hers ;
But are these women foolish quite ?

—I know. But, look you, there may be
Stains sad as wayside dust, I say,
Upon your own white hands (ah, me !)
No woman's tears can wash away.

One sees her baby's dimple hold
More love than you can measure. . . .
Then
Nights darken down on heads of gold,
Till wind and frost try wandering men !

But there are prisons made for such,
Where the strong roof shuts out the snow ;
And bread (that you would scorn to touch)
Is served them there ? I know, I know.

Ah ! while you have your books, your ease,
Your lamp-light leisure, jests, and wine,
Fierce outside whispers, if you please,
Moan, each : "These things are also mine !"

IN STREET AND GARDEN

IN STREET AND GARDEN.

I.

A CHILD'S CONCLUSION.

"MAMMA," he said, "you ought to know
The place. It's name is wicked, though.
Not China. No. But if you fell
Through China you would be there! Well.

"Fred said somebody very bad,
Named Satan, stayed down there, and had
Oh, such a fire to burn things! You
Just never mind. It can't be true.

"Because I've digged and digged to see
Where all that fire could ever be,
And looked and looked down through the dark,
And never saw a single spark.

"But Heaven is sure; because if I
Look up, I always see the sky—
Sometimes the gold-gates shine clear through—
And when you see a thing, it's true!"

II.

SELF-COMFORTED.

THE ragged child across the street
Stared at the child that looked so sweet :

“ I ’ll have a whiter dress than you,
And wear some prettier rosebuds, too ;

“ And not be proud a bit,” she said,
“ I thank you, miss,—when I am dead.”

III.

LITTLE GUIDO’S LOST PICTURES.

THE world may keep the best he gave to it.
That may be worth the world itself. Who knows?
Here, you who are his namesake, come and sit,
And read about him, by this budding rose.

The world may keep the Aurora. As for me,
I ’d rather see the pictures that he drew
In the divine dust, there, of Italy,
When Guido was a sweet, dark boy like you.

THE CHRISTENING

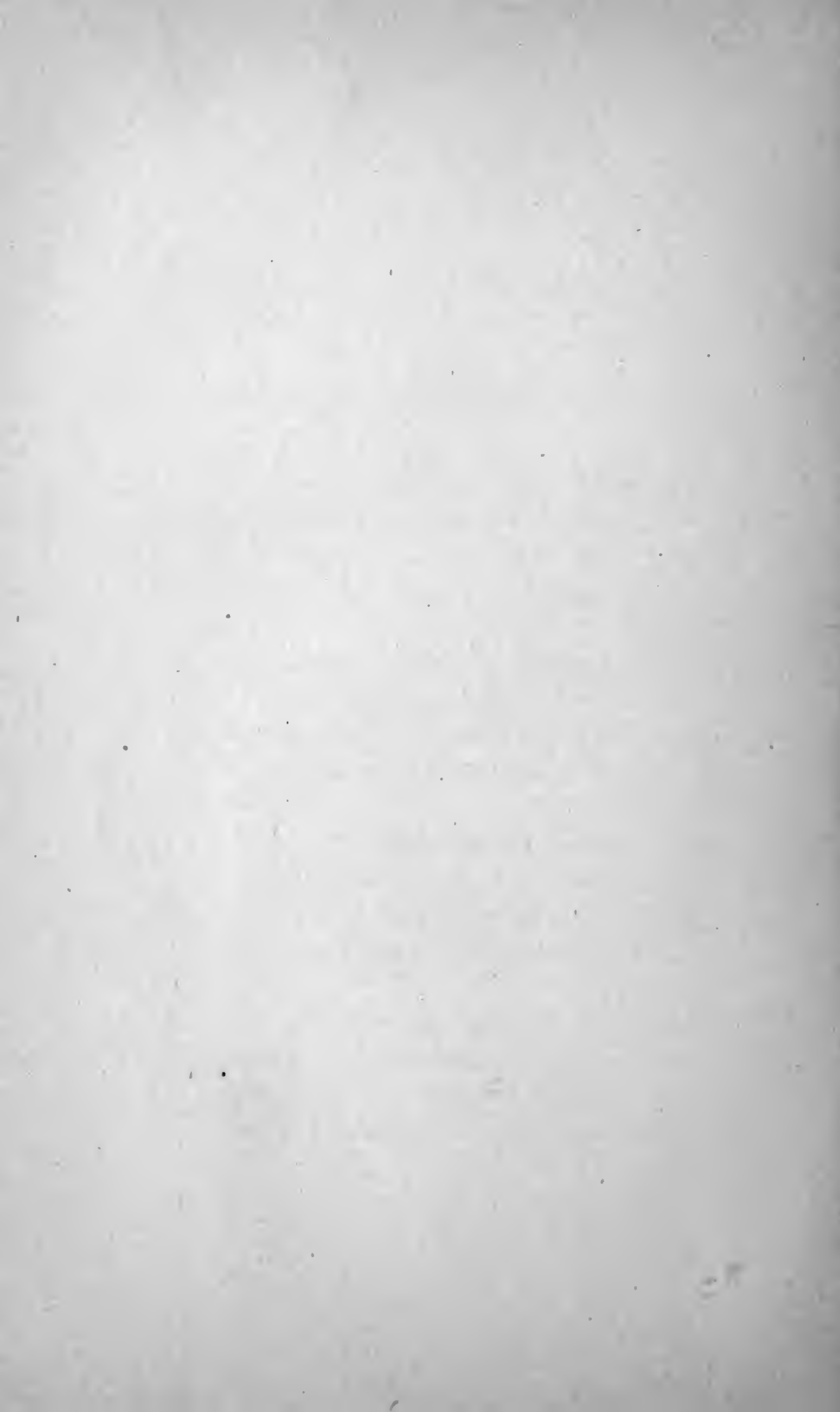
THE CHRISTENING.

IN vain we broider cap and cloak, and fold
 The long robe, white and rare;
In vain we serve on dishes of red gold,
 Perhaps, the rich man's fare;
In vain we bid the fabled folk who bring
 All gifts the world holds sweet:
This one, forsooth, shall give the child to sing;
 To move like music this shall charm its feet;
 This help the cheek to blush, the heart to beat.

Unto the christening there shall surely come
 The Uninvited Guest,
The evil mother, weird and wise, with some
 Sad purpose in her breast.

Yea, and though every spinning-wheel be stilled
In all the country round,
Behold, the prophecy must be fulfilled ;
The turret with the spindle will be found,
And the white hand will reach and take the
wound.

THE LITTLE COWHERD



THE LITTLE COWHERD.

“COME, look at her and you will love her.

Go, lead her now through pleasant places,
And teach her that our new-world's clover
Is sweet as Jersey Island daisies.

“Yes, you may do a little playing
Close to the gate, my pretty warder ;
But, meanwhile, keep your cow from straying
Across the elfin people's border.”

So to the boy his mother jested
About his light task, lightly heeding,
While in the flowering grass he rested
The magic book that he was reading.

At sundown for the cow's returning
The milkmaid waited long, I'm thinking.
Hours later, by the moon's weird burning,
Did fairy-folk have cream for drinking ?

. . . What of the boy ? By hill and hollow,
Through bloom and brier, till twilight ended,
His book had charmed him on to follow
The cow—the one that Cadmus tended !

TWO VISIONS OF FAIRYLAND

F

TWO VISIONS OF FAIRYLAND.

ONE with her blue, faint eyes could dream too much ;
 One, rosily sun-stained, wanted things to touch.

She met him on the stair with half a blush :

“How late you sleep !” he said. She whispered

“Hush ;

“I read that painted book last night, and so
 I dreamed about ‘Prince Charming’—— “Did you,
 though ?

“Why, I was wide awake in time to see
 All Fairyland ! I wish you’d been with me.”

“What was it like ?” “Oh, it was green and still,
 With rocks and wild red roses and a hill,

“And some shy birds that sang far up the air—
 And such a river, all in mist, was there.”

“Where was it ?” “Why, the moon went down on one
 Side, and upon the other rose the sun !”

“How does one get there ?” “Oh, the path lies
 through

The dawn, you little sleeper, and the dew.”



THE CHILD IN THE STREET.

*Even as tender parents lovingly
Send a dear child in some true servant's care
Forth on the street, for larger light and air,
Feeling the sun her guardian will be,
And dreaming with a blushful pride that she
Will earn sweet smiles and glances everywhere,
From loving faces, and that passers fair
Will bend, and bless, and kiss her, when they see,
And ask her name, and if her home is near,
And think, "O gentle child, how blessed are they
Whose twofold love bears up a single flower!"
And so with softer musing move away:
We send thee forth, O Book, thy little hour—
The world may pardon us to hold thee dear.*

NOTES TO POEMS

NOTES.

(¹) Read at the opening of The Children's Home Fair, Cincinnati, Ohio, April 1879.

(²) The children of the poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, photographed from a portrait painted by Thomas Buchanan Read. Mr. Longfellow alludes as follows to this little piece in a letter dated April 6, 1866: "Among these [the poems] is one which makes me feel a little—no, not a little—remorseful. It is 'The Sunshine of Shadows,' which you were kind enough to send me—how long ago I do not wish to remember—and for which I never thanked you by letter, though I did often in my heart. Pardon the neglect in one who has a great deal of writing to do, and a great many interruptions to prevent him from doing it. Accept my thanks now; no less sincere because tardy."

(³) The pathetic little episode to which this piece refers is related in the third book of Virgil's *Æneid*, lines 482-492, where the poet describes Æneas meeting Andromache during his wanderings, after the fall of Troy, with his son Ascanius (also called Iulus). To the latter Andromache gives some garments wrought by herself, and in presenting them she recalls her own boy Astyanax, who, in obedience to an oracle, had been thrown headlong from the walls of the Trojan city and killed. This was after the death of Hector, his father, whose parting with Andromache—in which the child "headed like a star," together with "the horse-hair plume," is mentioned—forms one of the most famous passages in the *Iliad* of Homer. The description in Virgil is literally

as follows : “ Andromache, sad with the last parting, brings garments figured over with golden embroidery and a Phrygian cloak for Ascanius, and loads him with woven gifts, and thus speaks,—‘Take these too, my boy, and may they be to thee mementoes of my handiwork, and bear witness to the lasting love of Andromache, Hector’s wife ; take these last gifts of thy friend, O only image remaining to me of my Astyanax. Just such eyes, just such hands, just such features he had, and he would now be growing up in equal age with thee.’”

(⁴) Written after reading certain newspaper discussions as to the treatment of the “tramp.”

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